

PAPER

PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN DISCOURSE: A LINGUOCULTURAL STUDY OF GENDER AND AGE REPRESENTATION

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Abstract

This study explores phraseological units from a linguocultural and cognitive perspective with particular attention to their gender- and age-related characteristics in discourse. Phraseology is examined not only as a structural component of language but also as a carrier of collective conceptual knowledge reflecting cultural values, emotional expression, and social interaction. The research emphasizes how idiomatic expressions encode evaluative meanings such as praise, reproach, and emotional reaction, revealing differences in communicative tendencies associated with gender and generational identity.

Key words: phraseology; lingua-culturology; cognitive linguistics; gender discourse; age variation; idiomatic expression; semantic pragmatics; cultural meaning; communicative identity

Introduction

Modern linguistic research increasingly recognizes phraseology as a crucial domain for understanding how language encodes cultural experience and social meaning. Phraseological units are not merely fixed lexical combinations; they represent condensed forms of collective knowledge shaped by historical, cultural, and cognitive processes. Their semantic richness allows speakers to express evaluation, emotion, and interpersonal

positioning in ways that extend beyond literal meaning. Consequently, phraseology has become an important area of inquiry within lingua-culturology and cognitive linguistics, where language is viewed as a reflection of how individuals conceptualize and interpret the world.

The interaction between phraseological meaning and discourse becomes particularly evident when examining how idiomatic expressions function in relation to gender and age. Communicative behavior is shaped by cultural expectations,

Compiled on: March 2, 2026.

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social roles, and emotional norms, all of which influence how speakers select and interpret phraseological units. Differences in tone, imagery, and pragmatic intention reveal that phraseology serves as a medium through which social identity is negotiated. Expressions associated with praise, reproach, encouragement, or emotional reaction illustrate how language encodes culturally shared models of behavior.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Contemporary linguistic scholarship increasingly recognizes phraseology as a key domain for understanding how language encodes cultural knowledge. Phraseological expressions are not merely decorative features of speech; they function as condensed carriers of lexical, semantic, pragmatic, stylistic, and cognitive meanings. Modern methodological approaches allow scholars to explore how such units operate within discourse as part of a broader conceptual system through which speakers interpret reality. Special attention has been given to phraseological constructions derived from somatic imagery, since they often reveal culturally embedded perceptions of the human body, emotion, and social interaction. Examining these units helps clarify their linguostylistic and pragmatic status in communication and highlights how phraseology serves as a bridge between language and national cultural identity.

The theoretical foundations of phraseology were established through the early structural insights of Ferdinand de Saussure, whose ideas influenced the pioneering work of Charles Bally, one of the first scholars to systematically analyze fixed expressions as meaningful linguistic units. Later research expanded these foundations. Scholars such as A. P. Cowie, J. R. Firth, and John Sinclair deepened the understanding of phraseological semantics and collocational patterns, particularly emphasizing the role of habitual usage in meaning construction.

In Uzbek linguistics, phraseology has been an active area of study since the mid-twentieth century. Researchers developed descriptive, lexicographic, and functional perspectives that documented the richness of Uzbek idiomatic

expression. While these works laid important groundwork, newer directions — especially cognitive and linguocultural approaches — continue to reveal how phraseological units reflect social values, identity, and communicative norms. Such perspectives are particularly relevant when examining spoken discourse.

The present analysis adopts an integrated methodological framework to investigate how phraseological units vary according to gender and age. Descriptive semantic analysis is used to identify structural and conceptual features of selected expressions. Sociolinguistic comparison explores how usage patterns differ among speakers of various demographic groups. Corpus-based observation allows for the examination of contextual frequency in written and spoken data, while interviews and surveys provide insight into speakers' attitudes toward idiomatic expressions in everyday communication. Comparative analysis further situates these findings within broader cultural frameworks. Together, these methods enable a multidimensional view of phraseology as both a linguistic and social phenomenon.

Phraseological units occupy a central position in linguocultural research because they embody culturally shaped conceptual knowledge. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, idiomatic expressions are not random lexical clusters but mental constructions reflecting how speakers categorize experience and preserve collective memory. The interaction between conceptual processing, linguistic expression, and cultural continuity demonstrates that phraseology functions as a living cognitive archive. Thus, studying phraseological meaning requires attention not only to structure and semantics but also to how these units are activated in discourse as socially shared knowledge. Speech patterns often reveal subtle gender-linked preferences shaped by cultural norms. Emotional expressiveness, tonal variation, and metaphorical richness tend to characterize communicative styles traditionally associated with women, whereas structurally dense and syntactically organized speech is more frequently linked to male discourse patterns. These tendencies should not be interpreted as rigid divisions but as culturally mediated communicative

habits.

Even when speakers employ identical linguistic resources, differences may arise in imagery, stylistic nuance, and pragmatic intention. In many communicative settings, masculine speech is perceived as direct yet socially moderated, while feminine speech is often described as relational, affective, and interaction-oriented. Such distinctions are best understood as discourse strategies rather than biological absolutes. When phraseological expressions are analyzed semantically and pragmatically, their activation in speech reveals how identity markers — including age and gender — shape communicative behavior. Idiomatic expressions can be grouped thematically according to imagery drawn from the body, animals, geography, or culturally symbolic experiences. Their classification depends less on lexical composition than on conceptual proximity and contextual function.

Particularly revealing are idioms expressing praise, reproach, blessing, or condemnation. These expressions encode emotional evaluation and social positioning, often reflecting collective values about relationships, morality, and interpersonal responsibility.

Gender-sensitive phraseological usage can be observed in English literary dialogue, where idiomatic language functions as a marker of emotional stance and social negotiation. In *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, characters frequently soften criticism through figurative phrasing, using idioms that imply restraint or social tact. Such expressions allow speakers to maintain politeness while signaling disagreement — a strategy closely tied to relational communication. In *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, idiomatic constructions associated with endurance and dignity illustrate how emotional states are framed metaphorically. These expressions communicate inner conflict without direct confrontation, revealing how phraseology mediates identity and agency. A different communicative tone appears in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, where domestic dialogue uses idioms of encouragement, mild reproach, and affection.

Phraseological imagery supports interpersonal bonding and moral guidance, demonstrating how

idioms function as social regulators. Idiomatic expressions associated with strong emotion — whether admiration, disappointment, or anger — show how speakers linguistically channel affect. Rather than focusing on literal insult or curse forms, English discourse often relies on metaphorical exaggeration, irony, or humor to release tension. Such strategies illustrate that phraseology provides culturally acceptable pathways for emotional expression while preserving social harmony.

Results and Discussion

Phraseological usage reflects broader cultural attitudes toward social roles, including gender expectations. Because language functions within social structures, idiomatic expressions often encode implicit assumptions about interpersonal behavior. Rather than viewing such expressions as static artifacts, they can be understood as dynamic indicators of communicative positioning. This interactional dimension can be illustrated through examples drawn from English literary discourse. In *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, characters frequently employ idiomatic language to negotiate social boundaries and gendered expectations. Expressions implying restraint, propriety, or emotional control signal how women are expected to manage interpersonal tension within hierarchical settings.

Similarly, in *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, figurative expressions related to endurance and self-possession function as linguistic markers of agency. When characters metaphorically describe someone as “holding her ground” or “keeping her composure,” these idiomatic frames reveal the tension between social convention and personal autonomy. A different dimension appears in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, where familial dialogue uses phraseological imagery to negotiate emotional solidarity and moral guidance. Idioms connected to patience, pride, or reconciliation help construct gendered models of maturity within domestic discourse. Across these examples, phraseological units operate as subtle communicative tools that encode culturally shaped expectations. They influence how speakers position themselves, soften disagreement, or assert identity. Thus, phraseology becomes a lens through

which social meaning is negotiated, reflecting both inherited norms and evolving discourse practices.

Phraseological usage also varies according to generational experience. Certain idioms are more common in mature speech communities, reflecting cultural continuity and pragmatic wisdom. These expressions often encode advice, evaluation, or relational expectations, signaling the speaker's social position and communicative intent. Across discourse contexts, idioms function as pragmatic shortcuts: they condense evaluation, signal stance, and align speakers with shared cultural meanings.

Conclusion: Phraseological expressions reveal how discourse reflects socially constructed identities. Their semantic and pragmatic flexibility allows speakers to negotiate age roles, gender expectations, and interpersonal dynamics. While the degree of gender marking varies across contexts, idiomatic language consistently serves as a bridge between cognition, culture, and communication. The evolving nature of social norms continues to reshape how phraseology is interpreted, yet its role as a carrier of collective experience remains stable across languages and cultures.

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